

EPI Update for Friday, February 12, 2010
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Poisoning from homemade stew**
- **What is the Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network?**
- **Update on availability of erythromycin ophthalmic ointment**
- **Melamine contaminated products still in circulation**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Poisoning from homemade stew

Recently, a family (in another state) became ill due to jimsonweed poisoning associated with eating homemade stew. Jimsonweed, a common weed that grows throughout the United States including Iowa, contains atropine and scopolamine. Ingestion can produce anti-cholinergic symptoms (*mnemonic: blind as a bat, dry as a bone, red as a beet, mad as a hatter, and hot as a hare*) and can lead to hospitalization and death. In the report, a family collected several herbs from their yard to use in the stew, including—accidentally—some jimsonweed. All family members who ate the stew developed altered mental status and required hospitalizations.

While snow covers most vegetation in Iowa now, spring is around the corner and plants will soon be sprouting. Remember that not all “herbs” in the garden are safe to eat, so be certain you can identify your food before you eat it! To read more about this poisoning, visit

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5904a3.htm

What is the Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network?

CADE has conducted influenza surveillance for years with the goal of characterizing how, when, and what type of influenza impacts the citizens of Iowa. The Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network is comprised of five program areas: outpatient provider, hospital, school, laboratory, and mortality-based surveillance.

Outpatient health care providers—20 clinics and emergency departments—report total patients seen and patients with influenza-like illness (ILI) weekly; in addition, six clinics provide detailed ILI patient information including rapid antigen test results.

Hospitals—30 hospitals which survey 40% of Iowa's acute care inpatient beds report influenza hospitalizations; in addition, H1N1 virus related-hospitalizations were made temporarily reportable.

Laboratories—the University Hygienic Laboratory (UHL) differentiates the various types and strains of viruses and coordinates the collection of rapid antigen test results from the 160+ clinical and reference laboratories throughout the state.

Schools—50+ schools report absence due to illness weekly; in addition, all Iowa schools report any day with greater than 10 percent absenteeism due to illness.

Mortality—pathologists and medical examiners, using postmortem specimen collection protocols, confirmed 12 of Iowa's 41 H1N1 deaths with postmortem specimens.

To learn how you can contribute to the state's influenza surveillance efforts, contact Meg Harris at mharris@idph.state.ia.us or 515-281-7134. For additional information about the surveillance network, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/flu/flu_brochure.pdf.

Update on availability of erythromycin ophthalmic ointment

The FDA has updated information on the availability of erythromycin ophthalmic ointment. Fera Pharmaceuticals has begun to release product for the 50 x 1 gm packaging configuration and Bausch & Lomb continues to release products for the 50 x 1 gm packaging configuration. For additional information, visit the FDA Drug Shortage Web site at www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/DrugShortages/ucm050792.htm

Melamine contaminated products still in circulation

Melamine contamination of milk and infant formula was first reported in July, 2008; however, there have been recent reports that contaminated products are still in circulation. For additional information, visit emergency.cdc.gov/agent/melamine/chinafood.asp
www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm179005.htm
www.who.int/topics/melamine/en/

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Save the date: The Iowa Governor's Conference on Public Health (formerly the Iowa Public Health Conference) on April 13 & 14, 2010 at the Scheman Conference Center, Ames, Iowa. For additional information, visit www.iowapha.org/Content/Documents/Document.ashx?DocId=94598.

Have a healthy and happy (and less snowy?) week!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
800-362-2736